

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Clarke Communications (formerly Central Lithographic)

Virginia's A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Clarke Communications Strategizes Now For Future Growth

Client Profile:

In 2004, Clarke Communications, Inc., formerly Central Lithographic Printing, acquired digital photography and mailing equipment in addition to a creative marketing firm, allowing them to expand services beyond printing. Clarke, Inc., now offers a wide range of services to its clients with one-stop shopping for design, printing and mailing/fulfillment. The company is located in Lynchburg, Virginia, and has 15 employees.

Situation:

Since acquiring the original Central Lithographic Printing almost a decade ago, owner Victor Clarke has continually grown his printing business. With the recent addition of design and mailing/fulfillment services, he wanted to ensure continued success and growth for Clarke, Inc. Victor was committed to developing a sound, strategic plan to excel operations to the next level. Virginia's Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership (VPMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, was invited to facilitate the development of a strategic plan.

Solution:

VPMEP is no stranger to Victor Clarke. Since 1998, VPMEP has maintained an ongoing relationship starting with lean implementation within their printing service. Michael P. Levy was assigned to lead the strategic planning project. He is the manager of VPMEP's Strategic Management Services (SMS) practice and delivers the practices' services to clients as a Professional Business Advisor. Michael specializes in helping company owners and leaders clarify and achieve their business goals using a 360-degree approach of enterprise-wide strategic management services including strategic and long-range planning. After initial consultations with Victor and other involved personnel, Michael recommended a six-step work plan. Those steps included: establishing the company's purpose incorporating vision, mission, values and guiding principles; analyzing and documenting present company strengths, weaknesses, market opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis); developing goals; identifying internal and external obstacles (learned from the assessments) to achieving new goals; establishing criteria for entering new market segments; and finally setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Accountable, Realistic and Time-based) objectives necessary for successful execution of the plan and the completion of the written plan. The benefits and impact that can be achieved from implementing a strategic plan for Clarke, Inc., is directly related to the commitment and involvement on the part of management. The impacts are measurable by comparing the initial baseline process outputs at the start of the plan implementation with the process outputs as the plan nears completion.

Results:

* Increased sales revenue by 7 percent.

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

- * Increased profits by 243 percent.
- * Increased sales per employee by 13 percent.
- * Experienced cost savings of \$95,000.

Testimonial:

"VPMEP has been a tremendous help over the past several years. The success of the strategic planning project with Michael Levy has put us in the top 25 percent of printers our size in terms of sales and, more importantly, profits."

Victor Clarke, President